

Message Text

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ACTION A-01

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R 061056Z JAN 76T

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6402

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

CINCPAC HONO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 0256

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP, TH

SUBJECT: VISIT TO THAILAND OF SENATOR J. BENNETT JOHNSTON

REF: BANGKOK 0163 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY. SENATOR J. BENNETT JOHNSTON (DEMOCRAT, LOUISIANA) AND HIS ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, CHARLES W. MCBRIDE, VISITED BANGKOK JANUARY 2-5. ON THE EVENING OF THE CODEL'S ARRIVAL, THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES HOSTED A DINNER WITH GUESTS FROM THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE U.S. MISSION. FOLLOWING A MISSION BRIEFING ON THE MORNING OF JANUARY 3, THE CODEL PAID A 45 MINUTE CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN (REFTEL). CHATCHAI ALSO HOSTED A DINNER FOR THE CODEL ON THE EVENING OF JANUARY 4. SENATOR JOHNSTON'S REMARKS ON CONTINUED U.S. INTEREST IN THAILAND WERE WELL RECEIVED BY THAI OFFICIALS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE MISSION BRIEFING FOR CODEL JOHNSTON FOCUSED ON THE ISSUES OF U.S. MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID, THE POLITICAL STABILITY OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT, THE
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SECURITY SITUATION IN THAILAND AND U.S. COMMERCIAL

INVESTMENT. IN RESPONSE TO THE CODEL'S QUESTIONS,
MISSION OFFICERS MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

-- THE MISSION BELIEVES THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE NEXT
SEVERAL YEARS IN TERMS OF U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS TO MAINTAIN
GRANT MILITARY AID TO THAILAND AT AROUND THE \$30 MILLION LEVEL.

-- FRESH OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE ECONOMIC AID PROGRAM
WILL END AFTER FY 77, ALTHOUGH SUPPORT ALREADY IN THE
PIPELINE WILL CONTINUE UNTIL 1980 OR 1981.

-- THE THAI ARE GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH THE STATUS OF
U.S. ECONOMIC AID, BUT IF MILITARY AID FALLS BELOW A
CERTAIN LEVEL WE BELIEVE THERE WOULD BE SERIOUS PROBLEMS.

-- FOR SEVERAL REASONS THERE IS ALMOST NO NEW U.S.
INVESTMENT IN THAILAND AT THIS TIME. SEVERAL MAJOR
PROJECTS PREVIOUSLY STARTED, HOWEVER, ARE CONTINUING.

-- THE MISSION DOES NOT EXPECT NORTH VIETNAM TO LAUNCH
AN OVERT INVASION OF THAILAND. WE DO EXPECT, HOWEVER,
THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WILL TAKE STEPS TO HEAT UP
THE INSURGENCY DURING THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS.

-- PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT WILL PROBABLY SURVIVE
THE UPCOMING VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE PARLIAMENT, BUT
HE MAY BE FORCED TO TAKE MORE PARTIES INTO HIS COALITION.
KHUKRIT IS A DEFT POLITICIAN AND HAS DONE WELL
IN HOLDING TOGETHER THE COALITION. THAILAND FACES MANY
PROBLEMS, HOWEVER, AND THE LONGER TERM FUTURE OF THE
PRESENT FORM OF GOVERNMENT IS NOT CERTAIN.

2. THAI RE-

ACTION TO SENATOR JOHNSTON'S VISIT WAS HIGHLY
POSITIVE. ALTHOUGH PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT WAS UNABLE
TO SEE SENATOR JOHNSTON BECAUSE OF PREOCCUPATION WITH
THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION, FOREIGN MINISTER
CHATCHAI MET WITH THE SENATOR FOR 45 MINUTES ON THE
MORNING OF JANUARY 3 (REFTEL). CHATCHAI LATER CALLED
THE CHARGE AND INVITED THE SENATOR TO DINNER SUNDAY
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EVENING, JANUARY 4. ATTENDING ON THE THAI SIDE, IN
ADDITION TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WERE UNDER SECRETARY
ANAN AND FOUR OTHER SENIOR MFA OFFICERS. AMBASSADOR
WHITEHOUSE WHO RETURNED TO THAILAND LATE JANUARY 3,
AND THE DCM WERE ALSO INCLUDED. THAI OFFICIALS WERE
ESPECIALLY PLEASED WITH SENATOR JOHNSTON'S COMMENTS
DURING THE CALL AND DURING DINNER THAT THE SENATE WOULD
BE PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO THAILAND NOW THAT THE

VIETNAM WAR WAS HISTORY. THE THAI WERE ALSO PLEASED WITH SENATOR JOHNSTON'S COMMENT THAT THE SENATE WOULD LOOK MORE FAVORABLY ON THE QUESTION OF AID TO THAILAND. THE THAI WERE ESPECIALLY GRATIFIED BY THE SENATOR'S EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FOR THAILAND'S DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SYSTEM. AT THE AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST, SENATOR JOHNSTON ALSO CONVEYED TO ANAN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S AND THE SENATE'S STRONG INTEREST IN DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO CURB THE FLOW OF ILLICIT DRUGS TO THE U.S.

3. THAI OFFICIALS IMPRESSED UPON SENATOR JOHNSTON THE CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THAI AND AMERICANS. MANY OF THE THAI MFA OFFICIALS WITH WHOM SENATOR JOHNSTON MET WERE GRADUATES OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES AND SPOKE FONDLY OF THEIR DAYS IN THE UNITED STATES. THEY ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT THAILAND WANTED TO MAINTAIN ITS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES. AS REPORTED REFTEL, FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI TOLD THE SENATOR THAT IN A CHOICE BETWEEN HANOI OR SAIGON, AND WASHINGTON, THAILAND WOULD CHOOSE WASHINGTON. UNDER SECRETARY ANAN ADDED THAT IF THE CHOICE WERE BETWEEN PEKING AND WASHINGTON, THE THAI WOULD STILL CHOOSE WASHINGTON.
WHITEHOUSE

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